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THE NEW BALANCE OF POWER IN EUROPE.

BY ARCHIBALD R. COLQUHOUN.

It is essential for the maintenance of the balance of power that the great States of Europe should be grouped in such a manner as to prevent any one from becoming the supreme arbiter of the continent. This is no academic or theoretic proposition to be artificially maintained in the interests of symmetry, but is the outcome of the law of self-preservation which applies to nations as well as to individuals. Therefore, while the political manœuvres of the European governments and their diplomatists may at times be puzzling, not merely to the man in the street, but to the student of world affairs, yet it will be found that on certain broad lines it is possible to disentangle the threads and to understand the drift of affairs. At the same time the growth and change inevitable in all States which are living organisms render any permanent grouping of the Powers unlikely, and, moreover, the psychological element which can never be fully reckoned with in the history of nations, may at any time provide surprises which alter the whole course of events.

For the greater part of the lifetime of most of us certain dominating features have determined the current of European politics. First, the Triple Alliance, the work of Bismarck; second, the great military power of Russia and her alliance with France; and third, the unquestioned naval supremacy of Great Britain. These three factors, by the balance of interests which they established and maintained, have secured peace to Europe, and have prevented any serious war between European States since the struggle of 1870, which founded the German Empire. But the last few years have seen changes which go to the foundations of that peace by striking at all these bulwarks. The Triple

Alliance still exists, but under circumstances which constitute a menace rather than a guarantee. Russia's military power has received an extraordinary check. Great Britain's naval supremacy is challenged. To older diplomatists it may well seem that the very foundations on which the European system has rested since the end of the Napoleonic wars is crumbling before their eyes. But, as it crumbles, another system will arise, and Europe, which has seen the decay of so much, will once more begin to build up.

Turning, for a moment, from the clash of national interests and ambitions, which is of course at the root of alliances and counter-alliances, we find all over Europe a non-national—a social, not a racial—movement. The rise of Socialism is not confined to any country in Europe, and, though it is modified by local circumstances and racial idiosyncrasies, it has certain broadly marked characteristics. The actual economic doctrine of the Socialists is not the most important feature of their movement—indeed it is a matter about which they disagree to an extent which even amounts, at times, to warfare. Their significance in the political world is that, under the parliamentary systems which prevail in most European countries, they now form a body in each governmental system which is opposed to constituted authority.

This phrase is, of course, only adequate in its broadest sense, for Socialism is a hydra-headed monster and cannot easily be summed up. In Italy (a constitutional monarchy) the movement is republican; in Spain (Catholic and monarchical) it is revolutionary; in republican France it is anti-militarist; in Germany (the most autocratic government in Europe) the Socialists are beginning to find a definite outlet as the champions of constitutionalism. In Great Britain the situation is complicated by the fact that Socialism has broken out, like an infectious disease, within a government ostensibly Liberal—nominally the heir of the Whig traditions. The outbreak has been signalized by the retirement from the ranks of Liberalism of Lord Rosebery and others, but a number of statesmen hitherto regarded as sound Liberals have been dragged along in the wake of the Radical-Socialist policy. The Red Flag, it must be observed, no longer stands for Utopianism, for the impossible schemes of idealists, but for definite political propaganda aimed at some vulnerable

point in each governmental system. The German Socialists, who lost ground when Prince Bülow went to the country on a national and patriotic issue, will find plenty of support if they identify themselves with an attempt to reduce the personal power of the Hohenzollern ruler. The British Socialists, who are by no means without support, even from the more sober Liberals, find in the necessity for raising increased revenue the opportunity for Socialist legislation, and, when that legislation is opposed by the House of Lords, gladly turn their attacks on that second Chamber. Now, the House of Lords really needs some measures of reform, and the Socialist element is again able to count upon outside help. Therefore, this movement from below, far better organized than any previous movement of the masses and now being skilfully directed along the lines of practical politics, is one with which all the governments have to reckon. The main difficulty is how to enlist the co-operation of these organized opponents in raising the enormous taxation necessary in modern States. As a result we find that in discussing the future balance of power we can almost leave out of account those traditional dynastic considerations which have been controlling factors in the past. Americans are accustomed to speak and think of Europe as "monarchical," but as a matter of fact the individual and personal element in European government will very shortly lose the significance of monarchical prestige and depend upon the predominance of character. It is only fair to William II to say that had he not been born in the purple he would certainly have won it for himself—he would have been Chancellor if he had not been Kaiser—but, being a leader by nature as well as by birth, he is now the one autocrat in Europe since Nicholas II (already dominated by a bureaucracy) has adopted what is at all events an attempt at a constitution. William II is not only his own war minister, but as supreme commander of the Army and the Navy can declare war and mobilize without asking the consent of any one. This power is secured to him by the constitution, but a further power is now in his hands since the retirement of Prince Bülow, who as Chancellor acted also as Foreign Minister and carried on the traditions of Bismarck to the extent of independent views on foreign policy. The present Chancellor was especially chosen because of his inacquaintance with, and inexperience of, foreign affairs, and the

Kaiser has assumed the active control of the foreign relations of his empire.

While the genius and personality of William II render such a combination of powers possible it is obvious that his whole position is an anachronism, that his attitude is a negation of the spirit of democracy, and that it is only by a series of brilliant successes that he can hope to hold his own against the forces from below. Hitherto his reign has been a period of increasing prosperity for the German people, and at intervals their pride has been satisfied by some demonstration of German power and prestige. The last of these was the humiliation of Russia in the Balkan crisis, and other instances are the dismissal of M. Delcassé, and the interference in Morocco on grounds which all Germany knew to be inadequate. To the outside world the Kaiser appears at times flamboyant, and within his own empire he has critics enough, but the vast majority of his people believe in his power to lead them along the path of prosperity to a still greater future—a future which, in vague but enticing language, he is continually holding up to them as the goal of Germanic ambitions. The internal situation in Germany, therefore, resolves itself into this. On the one hand the rise of a great industrial nation, largely influenced by collectivist ideals; on the other the personality of the German Emperor, and the fact that whether they will or no the whole German nation has been forged into a gigantic weapon for him to wield. The supreme question is whether he is wielding this weapon in a way which the German nation believes to be in its interests. There are people all over Europe who choose to believe that this is not the case, and that the German people themselves have no sympathy with the ambitions of their Kaiser. Personally, I am convinced that the vast majority of the nation are absolutely in accord with the foreign policy of the Kaiser, and it is only because of the support given him by his people that he is able to pile Pelion upon Ossa—not merely to maintain the vastest and best equipped army the world has ever seen, but to create a first-class navy as well. There may be grumbling about taxation, but this concerns merely the incidence of the burden, not the question as to whether the burden is to be borne. The vast naval construction was sanctioned practically without dispute.

The actual position of Germany is, of course, of primary im-

portance in discussing the balance of Power, because it is the growth of that country in armaments which, to borrow a phrase from Cecil Rhodes, has "upset the apple-cart," and apart from her internal strength Germany has consolidated her position by cementing, in the closest possible way, her alliance with Austria-Hungary. When Bismarck initiated the Triplice he was anxious not to draw the cords so tightly as to preclude the idea of understandings in other quarters of Europe as well—notably in St. Petersburg, but then Austria was but a weak ally, and Russia a powerful, potential enemy. To-day Austria-Hungary has an army second only to that of Germany in size and training, and together the two constitute a military weapon such as Napoleon never dreamed of. Thanks to the position always maintained by Francis Joseph as regards the army of the Dual Monarchy in refusing to grant it the use of languages other than German in the word of command, and in keeping it in other respects out of the whirlpool of national politics, the Austro-Hungarian army is unitary, easily combined with German troops, and has recently, it is stated by competent authorities, been co-ordinated on paper with the forces of Germany. The deadlock in parliamentary matters caused by racial dissensions interferes for the time being with the project for building Austrian Dreadnoughts, but the powerful influences which can be brought to bear will eventually overcome financial difficulties. In the conflict between German, Slav and Magyar which distracts the realm of the Habsburgs the first are a numerical minority, and the Slavs have a majority over Magyars and Germans together. In the long run this racial fact must tell, and when we remember the lifelong rivalry between Slav and Teuton it appears that the Alliance of Austria and Germany has no permanent foundation. But the inclusion of the Austrian states in a German Zollverein might prove irresistible, and, whatever the political future of the Habsburg domains may be, a large portion of them must be relegated to a German "sphere of influence," if not more. The position of Hungary is one of the most puzzling factors in Europe, but her geographical situation makes it impossible for her to contend against economic considerations which a great Germanic-Austrian Zollverein would bring into play. Here again the Socialist element, which is very strong in Austria-Hungary, has to be considered. Its influence so far is anti-national, and

would probably be exerted in favor of commercial union with Germany. Italy, the third party in the Triplice, is in a very different position to her partners. The enmity between her people and Austria is always ready to break out, as was evidenced recently when an eminent General in presenting new colors to a regiment practically told them that he hoped the flags would lead Italian soldiers to the recovery of their lost lands. Italy's acquiescence in the Bosnian annexation was secured by timely concessions on the coast of the Adriatic, but at the present moment the relations of Italy and Austria, though officially unruffled, are disturbed by two events. The first is the Isvolsky-Aerenthal dispute, in which the two statesmen try to throw on each other the onus for the steps leading to the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and on the top of this the Emperor of Russia visits the King of Italy and rather pointedly avoids Austrian territory en route. There is little doubt that Italy remains within the Triplice chiefly because the policy of her King is to secure his throne against republicanism by alliance with strongly monarchical countries, and also because Italy, whose fleet is only in its infancy, has an extended coast-line extremely difficult to defend. Italy has, however, attempted an insurance through an *entente* with Great Britain and is contemplating an extension of this understanding to France, but neither of these Powers, however good their will may be, can afford Italy protection in the quarter where she needs it. On her northern frontier the Trentino, lying on the southern slope of the Austrian Alps, and belonging not only racially but lingually and geographically to the kingdom of Italy, is a second Alsace to Italian patriots. Trieste and the eastern Adriatic Coast are partly Latin by tradition and sympathy, and the Irridentist faction in Italy has a popular following when it talks of the lost provinces which should once more be joined to the motherland. The Italian government cannot risk any expression of sympathy with these views, knowing too well the weakness of their position, with the great military combination of Germany and Austria-Hungary hanging over them. Between the devil of this menace and the deep sea of socialism and irridentism (two schools of thought far apart, yet united in embarrassing the government by their propaganda) the King of Italy and his advisers are obliged to cling desperately to the Triple Alliance long after it has ceased

to be acceptable to the people or of service in the direction for which it was originally formed. In estimating the balance of Power, therefore, Italy's influence is neutralized by the conflict between her sympathies and her needs.

When we try to estimate the extent to which William II is master of the situation in his own country, it is of importance to inquire how far he can reckon on support outside it, and for this reason. Although it is true, as the present writer believes, that the German people approve his policy at present, he has still to face the undoubted fact that the autocrat is popular only so long as he is successful. A monarch who is identified with his people in a more intimate way, who is really their servant rather than their master, as is the case in Great Britain, does not have to bear the whole brunt of the blame for any reverse which may fall upon the nation. At the time of the very worst British reverses in South Africa the personal popularity of the monarch was probably at its zenith. There was not even a disposition to blame his ministers. Contrast with this the outbreak of criticism with which the German papers signalized the diplomatic check given to Germany in Algeciras. The Kaiser, as has been said, has been careful at due intervals to provide some spectacular effect to remind his people how brilliantly he upholds the honor of the Fatherland, and in building the Navy the most strenuous attempts have been made to bring the spectacular side before the people, and to inflame and stimulate their imaginations. The Kaiser cannot risk failure at any point now, and with characteristic thoroughness determined to secure the Triplice far more completely than Bismarck had ever intended. Knowing that the reins of power must before long fall from the hands of the aged Emperor, King Francis Joseph, William II has made great efforts to secure the personal friendship of his heir, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, with whom in the past the German Emperor has not been on the most cordial terms. The Archduke did not like Berlin, and as an ardent Catholic and Austrian he has been offended by the "Los von Rom" movement and by the openly avowed theory of some of his Austro-German subjects that the Hohenzollern and not the Habsburg House is the legitimate ruler over Germans in Central Europe. Recently, however, the relations between the Archduke and the Emperor have improved, and the last incident was the

reception at Berlin, with royal honors never before accorded to her, of the Archduke's wife, the Princess Hohenberg, who was obliged to forego all royal rights in Austria for herself and her children when the Archduke married her. There is no doubt that the Archduke counts on the support of the Vatican to annul the declaration made on his marriage and to secure the succession of his son. Apart from personal ties, however, Austria will not be permitted to forget that Germany secured her from the intervention of the Powers after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The price to be paid for these favors has not been made plain as yet, but Europe has no doubt that the first result is the close alliance of the two great military powers and the construction of an Austro-Hungarian Navy which will act as the Mediterranean squadron to that fleet which is based on the North Sea. The principal disturbing influence which may upset the calculations of William II is to be found in the fact, already noted, that the policy of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand is dynastic and not national—it will never be popular with his predominantly Slav people, and, could they only achieve some sort of unity among themselves and a working alliance with the Magyars, the pro-German attitude of their government must undergo distinct modifications.

Against this consolidation of Central Europe into one vast armed camp we find a regrouping of the other Powers. Great Britain has composed her long differences with Russia and France, and the three now enjoy what is known as an *entente cordiale*. Practical politicians are sceptical as to the actual value of these somewhat indefinite understandings, and if their worth is to be computed in men or ships probably they are not very useful. But the moral element cannot be left out of account in international relations, and there is no doubt that the friendship between three great Powers, founded on a common danger—by far the most effectual tie—is of real use in maintaining the equilibrium of Europe. Unfortunately the new Triple Entente is composed of Powers geographically separated, and all three in a peculiar condition of unpreparedness, and the danger of the situation lies in the fact that the next few years offer to Germany an opportunity which may never occur again. Given the moment of weakness on the part of opponents and the necessity for some signal success to justify William II in his military and

naval policy and to demonstrate the advantages of the system of government which he typifies, is it conceivable that the opportunity will be allowed to pass without any attempt to take advantage of it to increase German power and prestige?

German writers like Professor Hans Delbrück have been busy demonstrating that the naval power of Britain was a menace to the world, which Germany felt obliged to check in the interests of peace. The fact that the British navy has not, with the exception of the bombardment of Alexandria, been engaged in war since Napoleonic times, is not alluded to or explained. The most significant, and indeed the conclusive, feature in the case is, however, the fact that German naval construction took on its most feverish aspect just at the time when the Government of England was cutting down naval expenditure, and when the Prime Minister had openly declared in favor of the limitation of armaments. This was represented as hypocrisy in German newspapers, but official Germany knew better. Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman was incapable of the particular form of duplicity, and he actually received a deputation of one hundred and forty-four members of the British Parliament desiring the reduction of the Navy. While the naval estimates were accordingly reduced, and all attempts to maintain the "two-power" standard were abandoned, Germany accelerated her rate of construction. The following dates are instructive. The British Liberal Government came into power in December, 1905. In 1906 a Naval Bill passed the Reichstag with flying colors, and fifty millions sterling were voted for naval construction, and although this Bill was greatly in advance of the one passed in 1900 (Germany's first move in the naval game) yet it only satisfied the Emperor and the Navy League for less than two years, and early in 1908 a Supplementary Bill was passed without opposition. The British government viewed these occurrences with apparent equanimity, and the first note of alarm was caused by the fact that the Germans accelerated their programme, and made it evident that their Dreadnoughts would be ready far sooner than had been estimated. The acceleration has been maintained, and the rate of construction, the amount of supplementary preparation in the shape of docks, harbors, canals and auxiliary vessels, are so unprecedented in the history of any nation as to be almost incredible. Gigantic as the official estimates are,

they by no means cover the whole naval expenditure, which, owing to the German method of financing public enterprises, is partly arranged for by loans outside the official estimates. Such extraordinary efforts were certainly not needed to protect German colonies, which, in fact, do not offer any temptations, nor is a fleet of Dreadnoughts specially designed for North Sea work suitable for the protection of the world-wide ocean-borne commerce which Germany possesses. Nor has it ever been demonstrated why that commerce should be endangered, since Great Britain has never shown the slightest disposition to interfere with or resent it. In short, no impartial observer who has studied the question on both sides of the North Sea can have any doubt that, whereas the British Fleet really existed for the protection of present and palpable interests, the German Fleet is aimed at creating a fresh sphere for its owners and as a weapon to increase, and not merely to maintain, the German share of power and prestige.

In considering the balance of power, therefore, we have to take into account the evidence that one Power, at all events, is not satisfied with her share, and is forging a powerful weapon in order to get more. The writer does not believe that the creator of that weapon has any definite plan as to when and how it will be used, but from his first master in strategy, Bismarck, he learned the important lesson that one must be prepared for any eventuality and must seize the first favorable opportunity. One thing is quite certain, he will be unable to maintain the heavy expenditure on naval and military matters and the martial ardor which has been stirred up without giving his people some tangible result for their money.

The situation, which is now fairly well understood by the small minority of people in Great Britain who give serious attention to foreign affairs, does not appeal in the same way to that democracy, which, like all democracies, is hardly capable of seeing through foreign eyes. It is so unlikely to the average Englishman, who is in a serenely pacific frame of mind, that any one should attack him, that he cannot be made to take the matter seriously. To the German, carefully taught by his teachers and his press to regard the Englishman as an aggressive animal before everything, it is equally obvious that he, with his predominance on the sea, blocks the way to a fresh world which,

otherwise, Germany could easily conquer. Without any immediate territorial designs, beyond coaling stations, Germany desires to be the first world-power, the arbiter of Europe—an ambition only to be realized by such a blow to England's Navy as would break its present predominance once and forever.

The balance of Power in Europe therefore, in the judgment of the present writer, depends upon the immediate action taken by Great Britain towards National Defence. Her Fleet needs to be not only strong but superlatively strong, equipped in every detail. While believing that such a condition can be attained, if her Government will undertake the work in earnest, there is ground to fear that at present much remains to be done, especially in detail. The enthusiasm of her overseas Dominions in the cause of Imperial Defence is a pledge for the future, but not a shield against present dangers. Finally, the great movement in favor of National Service, the compulsory military training of every able-bodied British citizen, must be placed in the forefront of her programme, because only by securing an adequate second line of defence can she free her Fleet for the work it ought to do. As a nation in Arms she should never have to face invasion, for it is one thing to invade a people defended by a paid army—beat the army and the people are conquered—but no one yet has attempted to invade a nation in Arms. In the interests of Peace, in the interests of the Balance of Power on which Peace depends, the British nation is called upon to make certain sacrifices, but these are as nothing compared to what she may be called on to pay if she does not make these sacrifices. Nor does the writer believe the effort required is so great as is sometimes represented—the mere indication of a finer intention to hold her own place would act as a check on the feverish naval activity of others, who would never have attempted to rival her had she not, by her blind quiescence, invited competition. But, even if the efforts needful to prove that she value the heritage she possesses and is prepared to defend it involve some sacrifices of time and money, she will, in making that sacrifice, find a national rebirth which will lead her on to a future greater even than her past, not by reason of aggression and acquisition, but by organization, consolidation and internal reforms.

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